

# Change: Natural & unnatural

We often think of parks as outdoor museums. Caretaking a living ecosystem, however, is very different than protecting unchanging objects.

Both natural features and human facilities may be different each time you visit. Both are changing all the time. How we take care of those features and facilities may also affect your visit. You won't notice the ozone monitor that works 24 hours a day, but you will see other activities such as revegetation, road work, painting, or trail maintenance. Some activities may unavoidably affect you, such as smoke from a prescribed fire, campsite closures due to revegetation, or bear management.

The park staff uses such actions as tools to maintain the landscape and protect its inhabitants and visitors. Your visit gives you but a snapshot of this process; Nature decides the timing of many of these actions. They all share one goal: preservation of these parks for us all, now and in the future.



*Fire in the Sierra usually hugs the ground. Its low flames clear dangerous built-up fuels. Without it, these fuels would feed intense, hard-to-control wildfires. The natural burn pattern includes occasional hot spots. These leave important openings in the forest — the sunny, bare places where sequoia trees regenerate best.*

©NPS Photo

## Making (Fire) History

In the summer of 1965, a young researcher named Richard Hartesveldt completed experiments at Redwood Mountain Grove in Kings Canyon National Park. He wanted to determine the effects that a century of fire suppression had on giant sequoia groves.

By today's standards, it was an exercise on a small scale — he "treated" just 12 acres with fire. This first experiment showed that sequoia seed-lings flourished after a fire.

Three years later of additional evidence later, these parks shifted fire-management policy from full suppression to include managing prescribed fire and lightning fires that improved forest health. That year park staff completed the 800-acre Rattlesnake Creek Prescribed Fire and managed the first lightning fire in National Park Service history on Kennedy Ridge.

As park resource managers reflect upon the past 40 years of fire science, it's appropriate to consider the significance of the work done here in the 1960s.

Although attitudes toward fire were changing, these researchers were making history, and it was not easy. The public and much of the fire-fighting community still believed that wildland fire was nothing but destructive and deadly.

The idea that wildland fire was a natural event like rain or snow, that it could improve the beauty and health of an ecosystem, that the parks' very reason for existence — the giant sequoias — might actually thrive with a natural fire cycle, was a radical departure in thought.

But the conviction that fire belonged in the forest grew from clear evidence, and the willingness to act on it was commendable. It earned a place in resource history for these parks, and a reputation for park management based on good science that continues to this day.

## WILDERNESS OVERNIGHTS

Each park trail has a daily entry quota for overnight trips, and between late May and late September a wilderness camping fee of \$15 is required. The quota and fee are used to help protect your wilderness environment and experience. (They are not required for day hikes, or for overnights in the adjacent Monarch and Jennie Lakes wildernesses in US Forest Service. However, a free fire permit is required for any open flame on USFS land.)

A permit is required for each overnight trip. Reserved and first-come, first-served permits are issued the morning of your trip or after 1pm the day before at the park permit station/visitor center nearest your trailhead (see pages 8 & 9). If the quota for your preferred trail is full, you can choose another trail for that day or another day to start, if space is available. Permits are not issued after mid-afternoon as minimum distances must be reached before you camp.

Requests to reserve a permit for a certain date are accepted beginning March 1 and at least 2 weeks before your trip's start date.

Reserved permits must be picked up either the afternoon before or by 9am on the day of departure. If delayed, call the Wilderness Office or you may lose the reservation.

Camping in the park's "front-country" is permitted only in campgrounds. Camping or sleeping in vehicles is not allowed in parking lots, pull-outs, picnic areas, or trailheads in the park.

Wilderness Permit Reservations  
Sequoia & Kings Canyon N.P.  
47050 Generals Highway #60  
Three Rivers, CA 93271  
1-559-565-3766; Fax 565-4239

For more details, visit Wilderness Information at [www.nps.gov/seki/planyourvisit/wilderness.htm](http://www.nps.gov/seki/planyourvisit/wilderness.htm) or call.

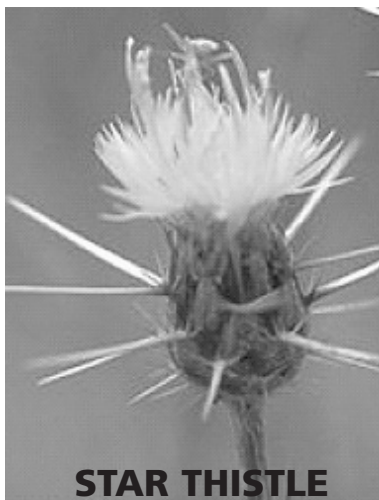
## HIGH SIERRA LODGE

• **BEARPAW MEADOW CAMP**  
(DNCR) [www.visitsequoia.com](http://www.visitsequoia.com)  
Reservations (required) taken starting 7am, 01/02/008: 1-888-252-5757. Open mid-June to mid-September. This tent hotel is at 7800' on the High Sierra Trail, an 11-mile hike from Giant Forest.

## Unnatural change: Alien invaders!

Plants and animals evolve together in communities over time. Often they keep each other in check. When species get brought in from other places, the newcomers may multiply wildly since the competitors, predators and diseases they evolved with in their home communities are not here. They break links in the local web of life, badly disrupting species that depend on each other. Sometimes they completely replace native plants and animals.

Practice alien hygiene! Look for seeds and tiny animals attached to shoes, clothes, waders, equipment, tires, and pet fur. Wash mud from under cars and on tires before coming into the parks. The natives will thank you!



**STAR THISTLE**

### Two immediate threats:

Star thistle is one of the most damaging non-natives in the state. Dense, thorny patches completely exclude native plants, and limit wildlife movements. Not yet established here! If you recognize it from your home or travels, make sure not to bring it in.

New Zealand Mud Snails take over waterways that they invade, eating most of the food. Due to their biology, just one snail can start a huge population! They stick on gear; check boots & waders thoroughly for this tiny invader. Common just east of the parks. Could easily be carried into the Sierra.



**NEW ZEALAND MUD SNAIL**